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DEVELOPMENT OF THE CAPABILITIES OF THE VIET MINH
FOR CONVENTIONAL WARFARE*

Summary

It is evident from the rapid expansion of Viet Minh military capabilities since the fall of Dien Bien Phu in May of 1954 that the Viet Minh, with the direct support of the Chinese Communists, are preparing for any eventuality in Indochina, including a renewal of large-scale hostilities.

The position of military strength being achieved by the Viet Minh has been made possible by the high level of munitions shipments from Communist China since the Dien Bien Phu campaign, including large quantities which have been shipped since the effective date of the prohibition on the import of war material (except on a piece-for-piece replacement basis) provided for in Article 17 of the Geneva cease-fire agreement. These ordnance shipments have enabled the Viet Minh to re-equip and expand their regular army strength

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and at the same time to increase greatly the firepower of all units. Emphasis is being given to the training and re-equipping of regular forces with antitank and antiaircraft weapons. This Chinese aid, moreover, has made possible the accumulation by the Viet Minh of a stockpile of military supplies which probably is adequate to permit initiation of large-scale military operations without a prior logistic buildup from Communist China.

* The estimates and conclusions contained in this report represent the best judgment of ORR as of 25 January 1955.

The flow of military aid from Communist China in the past year has included from 1,000 to 1,500 trucks, resulting in a major increase in Viet Minh truck transport capabilities. It is now estimated that the Viet Minh truck park totals at least 2,000 vehicles and possibly as many as 2,400. The number of military transport companies has at least tripled since early 1954. At the same time that truck transport capabilities were increased to provide support for more heavily equipped forces, the Viet Minh continued their road construction. These efforts are now aimed principally at improving north-south routes between the Chinese border and the Demarcation Line, and east-west access routes leading into Laos.

This expansion of Viet Minh military power clearly has an intimidating effect on South Vietnam, adversely affecting its ability to withstand political and subversive pressure from the Communists. This expansion also poses a considerable threat to Laos, where the Viet Minh have continued to promote the Pathet Lao movement in opposition to the Royal Laotian government. The buildup of the Viet Minh as the strongest indigenous military force in Southeast Asia not only contributes directly to the objective of extending Communist influence by means short of war but also provides them with a considerable capability for overt military action. The significance of this threat is magnified by clear evidence that the long-range planning of the Viet Minh is fully supported by Communist China.

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